

Parks Legacy Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting

Meeting Notes for Meeting #8

November 7, 2013

Committee Members Present: Co-chairs Barbara Wright and Charlie Zaragoza, Thatcher Bailey, Steve Daschle, Bill Farmer, Juli Farris, Thomas Goldstein, Jessie Israel, Diana Kincaid, Yalonda Gill Masundire, Michael Maddux, Brice Maryman, Erika Melroy, David Namura

Welcoming Remarks

Charlie Zaragoza welcomed the committee members and the public to the eighth meeting of the Parks Legacy Citizens Advisory Committee. This meeting is entirely devoted to a public hearing; people will have 2 minutes to speak. Written comments are welcome and receive the same weight as oral comments.

Public Hearing Comments

“Pop” Mounger Pool (in costume), Pop Mounger Pool Advisory Council

- The City needs to use the pool to its maximum capacity – extend the pool season to May and through September.
- The pool is very popular and well attended, serving all ages.
- The costs will be offset by revenue.

Mike Loebe, COLA treasurer

- There is a big dog-owning constituency, but no off-leash initiative – the City should do more.
- Dog owners will support the ballot measure if there is a highly-prioritized project for off-leash areas that includes funds for new parks, maintenance, and amenities.

Dr. Julie Steverson, PHD, Neighborhood House

- Please support initiatives 2, 19, 21, and 22, as these initiatives will increase access for immigrant and refugee communities.
- These initiatives add play space, which will help address racial health disparities.

Margaret Britton for Jonathan Geiger, Seattle Chinese Garden

- The Seattle Chinese Garden is located at South Seattle Community Center and has had a partnership with the City of Seattle for over 30 years.
- Parks and Recreation was involved in the creation of the Garden – thank you for the support.
- Please increase the funding amount for the Major Projects Opportunity Challenge Fund to be able to support projects like the Garden.

Bill Chao, Next Step Archery

- Next Step Archery is a non-profit education provider, and the top archer in the world comes from this organization.
- There are competition and select travel teams, and young athletes are involved in one of the fastest growing sports in the U.S.

Terry McLaughlin, Seattle Aquarium Board

- Please support major maintenance funding for the Aquarium and keep it as a high priority.
- The Aquarium is the primary source for marine conservation education.
- It was built and is owned by the City, and is operated by the non-profit, saving the City money because the Aquarium gets no operating subsidy.
- The City is responsible for major maintenance of a facility that exists in a harsh saltwater marine environment, and there is a \$14 million major maintenance backlog.

David Folweiler, President, Groundswell Northwest

- Initiative #9 – Park Acquisition Leverage Fund – thank you for increasing the funding amount to \$3 million, but this is still less than the current levy has for acquisition, so please increase to \$5 million.
- #14 – Maintain 14 New Parks at Land-Banked Sites – where is the development money coming from? *[Staff note: the development funding is coming from the Central Waterfront Initiatives, 17A & 17B; the Central Waterfront will not be developed until 2018, so for years 2015-17 the funding will be allocated to develop the 14 land banked sites at \$750,000 per park.]*
- Please recommend a permanent funding mechanism—either an MPD or permanent levy.

Dave Boyd, Groundswell Northwest

- Groundswell Northwest has been working to save land in northwest Seattle since 1972.
- Please find permanent funding, either an MPD or permanent levy.
- Having worked on the last 2 levies – there was some maintenance in Pro Parks but it disappeared when the levy ended, and there is a clear need to fund maintenance.
- We need to take care of what we have, plus fund new parks.

Fran Milan, Groundswell Northwest

- Thank you, Committee, for all your work; please be bold to tackle the issue of long-term funding – be open to new ideas and ways of doing business.
- Parks and open space need other funding options to complement the General Fund – either an MPD or a permanent levy.
- Explore partnerships and be ready to clear red tape.

John Covello

- More people use off-leash areas than use community centers and pools – OLA's are one of the largest user groups.

- With more density there is more need for OLA's – they are an essential amenity for dense areas, especially South Lake Union, Queen Anne, and Alki.
- We need to enhance the off-leash areas with more maintenance, lights and other amenities, so please fund an investment initiative for them.

Avane Price, teen

- Community centers need more money, as do teen programs.
- Parks community centers and teen programs keep kids off the street – they are safe places for kids to go and hang out.
- Please provide more games and activities.

Carol Fisher, Lifelong Recreation Advisory Council

- I welcome change when the benefits are better than the costs; however, this is not the case with the MPD.
- The MPD is not necessary – voters OK levies, and while levies are not perfect, a long-term levy is preferable to an MPD.
- Acquisition and recreation programs should be included in the ballot measure that reflect changing demographics, plus address the major maintenance backlog.

Tiya Farah

- The Women of the World Swim program is very important – it is the only way some women can swim who cannot mix with other genders.
- The program provides a healthy place to work out and establish a healthy lifestyle.

Ellen Meserow-Sauer, Genesee Off-Leash Area

- We need to stand up for off-leash areas – please put money in the levy for new ones, especially in the south end, South Lake Union and Queen Anne.
- Off-leash areas need money for maintenance, to build rain shelters, and to add lights, as dog parks are pitch-black and not safe to enter at night.
- Please add an investment initiative for off-leash areas as there are more dogs than kids in Seattle.

Jessica Spears, steward for Jose Rizal Off-Leash Area

- We are desperate for off-leash area maintenance, as OLAs get little or no maintenance funding, and need to be four acres or more.
- Please add an off-leash area investment initiative as there are more dogs than kids in Seattle.
- And please don't put gravel in off-leash areas as the dogs don't like it.

Lucy Flanagan

- The City is long overdue for off-leash area enforcement, but there is also a design flaw as the areas are not big enough and are badly designed, making some off-leash areas counter-productive for dogs.
- Please take a comprehensive look at off-leash areas – a comprehensive OLA master plan.
- The funding measure needs a dog park initiative.

Isaac Wenze

- Parks' youth and teen programs gave me the inspiration to learn skills and get job training.
- I participated in the Youth Engaged in Service (YES) employment program and lifeguard training – thank you to the community centers for these opportunities.
- Please allow these programs to be delivered to more teens like me and place a high priority on the youth and teen initiative.

Mark Okazaki, Executive Director of Neighborhood House

- Resources are needed to support community-based programs, for example the Women of the World Swims.
- In the proposed new levy, there are great opportunities to be innovative in addressing health disparities in immigrant communities.

Tami English, Seattle Adaptive Sports

- Seattle Parks doesn't provide services for people with physical disabilities, as the Special Populations program is just for people with mental disabilities.
- People in Seattle Adaptive Sports go on to the Special Olympics and college sports; however, school's physical education can't support these kids, so Seattle Adaptive Sports works with kids and adults with a range of disabilities.

Nancy Engle

- Parks needs to keep Pop Mounger pool open longer, during May and September.
- The pool also needs lighting; the community's dream is for a covered pool that could be used throughout the year.
- Better maintenance is needed, especially in the shower area.

Ryan Harrison, Seattle Neighborhood Greenways, Beacon Bikes

- The issue is getting people to parks that don't have good access right now, by creating inviting, safe, corridors.
- At Jefferson Park, we got a crosswalk across Spokane Street through both Parks and SDOT, but it was a difficult process.

David Ward, Lifelong Recreation supporter

- Supports the Food and Fitness program, which serves populations that others do not serve.

- Supports Sound Steps program, which keeps people active, including some in their 90s.
- Supports dementia recreation program, which no one else does in the city.
- Funding these programs is cheap—\$135,000 per year.
- Supports a levy, and not an MPD.

James Simone, North Central Little League, Roosevelt High Baseball

- Athletics are important part of youth development, and teach life skills.
- Supports a levy measure to improve athletic fields in city. We have many fields that are under maintained or underutilized because they don't have field turf (underutilized are at Woodland Park).
- Synthetic surfaces reduce maintenance costs and allow for year-round use.

Dr. Brian Saelens, Professor of pediatrics at University of Washington, researcher at Seattle Children's Hospital

- Applauds Committee on inclusion of initiatives #37 (Get Moving Fund) and #22 (Increase Ability to Engage Historically Underrepresented Communities).
- We need to increase access to recreation for low-income communities.
- You have to engage community groups to understand them. Let's continue to be pioneers and to understand what real access to recreation looks like.

Donna Hartmann-Miller

- Supports a short-term capital and infrastructure repair levy (only if an asset management technology system is installed).
- Does not think a new pool should be included.
- Greenways should be funded through SDOT, not Parks.

Robert Williams, Woodland Park Zoo

- Zoo strongly supports efforts to establish an overarching funding vision.
- Since 2008, the Zoo has operated without funding from the City for major maintenance projects.
- Funding would address seismic upgrades, roof replacements, water systems, and electrical systems.

Charlotte Bontrager, Woodland Off-Leash Dog Park, Citizens for Off-Leash Dogs (COLA)

- There are many off-leash dog park users, who are one of Parks' largest user groups. There are more dogs than children in Seattle.
- Woodland dog park has no signage, but has over 150 human visitors each day.
- Our volunteers have contributed a great deal, but desperately need funds to keep the park safe for humans and dogs alike.

Lois Loontjens, Eastlake P-Patch

- We are urging funding for initiative #35 (Urban Food and P-Patch)

- Much of the original material used to build our P-Patch is now rotting.
- P-Patches throughout the City need infrastructure improvements.

Sharon Levine

- Supports more funding for and an increased number of dog off-leash areas.
- Does not support a metropolitan park district. An MPD is a totally different form of parks management, and prevents citizen accountability. An MPD cannot be dissolved by voters, and is not subject to City's laws, boards, or commissions. An MPD would be a state-chartered body, and its board would not have to follow City rules. The City should not move to create an MPD unless these issues are resolved.

Kim Pham, Family Ambassador for Yesler Community

- Please fund community outreach.
- Effective outreach means: Attending community meetings, being patient and getting to know the community, funding multilingual and multicultural outreach workers, working with community partners to recruit, and having unique programs that meet different cultural needs.

Sieng Dinh, Quit Ngo, Liem Le (translated by Kim Pham)

- Make it a priority to provide access for low-income elderly, and make it a priority to provide Vietnamese translation.
- Please make fee free for seniors—it's still too expensive, even with a scholarship.
- Open exercise classes from 7am to 11am for elderly, have more exercise rooms, and offer more cultural exercise for elderly.

Jeff Jordan, Greenways

- Parks should get people out of their motorized cages.
- Greenways should go through parks.
- Supports funding for greenways.

Mark Bishop, Co-Rec Soccer

- Over time, Parks has responded to community athletic demand and has installed and built playfields.
- We support all initiatives that help athletic fields, and especially support initiative #1 (major maintenance).

Loren Hill, Friends of Athletic Fields, Magnuson Park Advisory Committee

- Raise the priority of and support for athletic fields.
- Many field users are turned away because of a lack of usable fields. Field users contribute to community by coaching and by non-profit administration of leagues.
- Field fees are going up and up, and it's becoming harder to find field time.

Dee Dunbar

- Supports Green Seattle Partnership.
- GSP helped to integrate me into community after I moved here.
- Not enough staffing at community centers to mobilize kids for GSP.

Muftah Ali, Rainier Community Center

- Rainier Community Center is a great place for kids to hang out. They can do homework, hang out in computer lab, and go on trips.
- We need more funding to keep the gym clean, and be able to do more fun stuff. Community centers should be a good, safe place for everybody.

Carey Gerstein, Greenways

- Before it was settled, Seattle was a park.
- Parks should be extended through greenways. They make parks more accessible to more people, and create safe connections. A connected city leads to social justice. I would like to see funding increased.

Leda Chahim, Director of Government Affairs, Forterra

- Supports Initiative #13, Natural Area and Green Seattle Partnership (GSP) Support.
- Funding from this initiative, taking together with existing funding, would allow GSP to begin meeting the goals set out in the 20-year vision.

Brock Howell, Cascade Bicycle Club

- Supports Initiative #30, Activating and Connecting Greenways.
- There is overwhelming support for this initiative, and Cascade Bicycle Club is ready to put its weight behind passing a ballot measure.
- We need to make sure funds are distributed using a social justice lens; ensuring areas that don't have safe bicycle access to parks are addressed.

Gordon Padelford, Seattle Neighborhood Greenways

- Initiative #30 is not about sending funding to SDOT; this is a partnership to remove bureaucracy to create safe access to parks.

Mel Burchett, Melrose Promenade Committee

- Supports Initiatives #30 and #11.
- Melrose Promenade is a community-generated project seeking to make Melrose Ave. safer for all. The project includes improvements to Bellevue Place Park.
- Supports Initiative #30 which would help support greenways, and Initiative #11 that supports community projects. These would help Melrose Promenade.

Mike Stanley, Green Lake Small Craft Center Advisory Council

- Supports Initiatives #1, #5, and especially #8.
- The Small Craft Center occupies three buildings which were very heavily damaged during 2001 earthquake, and we have a sewage problem. We strongly support Initiative #8.

Jawara O’Conner, Rainier Riders, Seattle Neighborhood Greenways, and Bike Works

- Supports Initiative #30, Activating and Connecting Greenways.
- Would you let your children ride bikes to and from parks?

Mariska Kecskes, Forterra

- Supports Initiative #13, Natural Area and GSP Support.
- Important that funding is a match of capital funding instead of replacing previous funding, or the result will be funding cut in half.

Grace Bennett, Camp Long Advisory Council

- Not OK with #23 Provide for Environmental Education and Outreach being a low priority.
- Building a love of nature in youth builds future supporters of parks.

John Barber, Leschi Community Council

- Initiatives #4 and #5 are Leschi Community Council’s top two priorities.
- We are active volunteers, but we aren’t able to meet our potential without additional support.

Reb Pink Bee, Evanston P-Patch

- Please support P-Patch initiative to renovate existing and develop potential new gardens. My garden, Evanston Garden, builds community, is a space for relaxation, and is a place to grow healthy, organic food.
- It needs a new water system, new bed framing, and a fence.

Julio, and Cory Manago, Austin Foundation

- Representing Austin Foundation, which helps youth become healthier through fitness and better eating habits. Our program is free, until a participant turns 18.
- We need funding to keep this program open.
- At-risk youth don’t usually get opportunities to learn skills like this.

Jen Calleja, Neighborhood House

- Also big fan of Austin Foundation.
- Get Moving initiative is very important to increase access to recreation.
- Supports initiative to increase access to recreation for underrepresented communities—but the funding amount is not enough. There are 7 primary languages throughout the city—to fully fund services, we need more funds.
- Also supports initiative to restoring community center operations.

Michael Wells, Capitol Hill Chamber of Commerce

- We're incredibly proud of Cal Anderson Park, but safety issues have increased.
- Cal Anderson Park has become a park where people don't feel safe anymore.
- We're primarily looking to activate this park. We support activating urban center parks—Cal Anderson has downtown park issues. We also support additional park rangers.

Marissa Chavez, Westwood Neighborhood

- Affordability for classes offered is not currently a committee priority. Fitness classes at Delridge now cost \$45 a month, for class that meets once a week. If I want to participate in open swim or take my toddler to gym, it is an additional cost.
- There should be a simpler, citywide scholarship fund that is equitable and dedicated specifically to communities with fewer opportunities.

Kevin Long, Green Lake

- Concerned about field space and field usage. There's not enough access to quality field time across city. It can be a scheduling nightmare.
- I'm speaking to support adding more playfields.
- Excited about major maintenance initiative which will fund repairs to some fields. Also support completing fields at Magnuson Park.

Diane Holterman, Pinehurst

- Supporting natural areas and native habitat in parks. Glad to see Urban Forest/GSP initiative is 13th on your list. Natural areas are very important as density increases.
- Animal control officers are also needed, so please increase the priority of the safety initiative.

Don Romine

- Works with county parks to clean up cigarette butts in parks. Over two to three hours in a park, we can pick up about 4,000 butts, which are recycled.
- Supports urban food initiative, and supports life skills for homeless initiative. Also supports natural area and urban forest initiative.

Mehret Tekri, Neighborhood House, High Point Community Council

- Outreach to immigrants and refugees is very important—not translation, but outreach. Staff at ten community centers aren't representative of the community they serve. Increased training of staff is needed.
- Supports restored community center hours. If a permanent funding source, increase funding level.
- Supports initiative for outreach with underrepresented communities.

Skip Ewing (Phinney Ridge)

- Mr. Ewing's grandfather was instrumental in the original acquisition of Woodland Park.

- Keep developing this treasure with artificial turf at the Lower Woodland fields and for the softball/baseball quad.
- There is a user problem when the weather doesn't allow year-round use of grass fields; the artificial surface would increase use and reduce maintenance costs.
- The 1959 Forward Thrust bond issue was the last time there was a major improvement to the complex.

Morgan Collins, Magnuson Park Advisory Committee; Sail Sand Point Executive Director

- Has seen community sailing centers around the world – Sail Sand Point is a gem.
- Five SSP kids are challenging for the Olympics.
- 20% of the operating budget goes to scholarships; people can trade sailing for volunteer work.
- There is an infrastructure problem with the pier – the only place in the city for public sailing; so please add this to the project list.

Patty North, Volunteer naturalist doing environmental education in 5 parks

- While she recognizes the importance of maintenance and operations, environmental education, Investment Initiative #23, should be higher in the priority list.
- The density of Seattle is increasing with a growing population, natural areas are scarce and climate is changing; therefore, the importance of environmental education is increasing.
- Naturalists perform an ever-increasing role in getting people to understand the connectedness of the natural world and make personal choices to survive – please move environmental education up in the priority list of projects.

Mark Holland, Jefferson Park Planning Committee

- Regarding the property acquisition fund – it is great to buy more park land for dense areas, but Parks dumped 15 acres off of Jefferson Park which went back to Seattle Public Utilities by modifying the Memorandum of Agreement between Parks and SPU.
- Need to bring these 15 acres back into Jefferson park; we don't need to buy new parks when we could get 15 acres back free.
- Regarding the soda tax, don't tax contents, tax the cup to fund maintenance costs for downtown parks.
- Neighborhood parks get a lot of bang for the buck.

Jennifer Ott, Friends of Seattle Olmsted Parks

- Please identify Olmsted parks and boulevards in Parks' major maintenance plan.
- Olmsted parks have suffered due to budget cuts; the historic structures and landscapes have deteriorated.
- The Olmsted parks need to be specifically identified for maintenance and renovation – we can't rely on volunteers to keep the Olmsted legacy.

Ted Barker, Friends of Athletic Fields

- There is great value in youth sports – don't make Seattle a community of empty nesters and young singles; keep activities for kids and families.
- Need maintenance funding for fields.
- Parks does an excellent job doing programs for kids, but there needs to be good funding for field maintenance to take pressure off athletic fees.

Tim Motzer

- Thank you from a former Parks employee for the great job the Committee is doing.
- He especially appreciates the recognition of the maintenance needs – why build more when we can't maintain what we have; therefore, it is good the Committee is prioritizing maintenance.
- Use a levy rather than an MPD for the new funding.
- Lake City needs a full service community center; it is an urban village hub with a growing and diverse population, so please include funding for this in the levy.

Mark van Walter

- Please support Councilmember Licata's request for a full service community center in Lake City.
- The current center was built in 1958 by the Lions Club and is not staffed by Parks like other community centers; there are only 2 rooms and it is dysfunctional.
- There are about 40,000 people in the Lake City neighborhood who are without a community center and the neighborhood is zoned to grow with 65 to 70 foot buildings .
- With non-home ownership increasing, a community center becomes very important.

Bill Bradburd, City Neighborhood Council

- The City Neighborhood Council apologizes for how its letter was delivered at an earlier Committee meeting.
- The Council is concerned regarding how Parks is spending money; according to the Trust for Public Land Report, Seattle has the most employees per capita, nationwide, and is 4th in spending per capita, but is still not keeping up with the need.
- Use the city auditor to find out if Parks is spending money in the right way.
- A metropolitan park district is a dramatic change in how we operate parks – what are the implications of an MPD?

Shelly Buckholz, Magnolia Soccer Board

- Ms. Buckholz supports initiatives # 1 and 15 – her three kids play sports and the Magnolia fields need improved drainage.
- There is mud year-round and the kids play in rain boots.
- There are no synthetic fields in Magnolia, which would be great because they can be used year-round. Now, Magnolia kids have to travel to play when the community fields are closed.

Ann Busch, Parks employee – Assistant Coordinator at Ballard Pool

- Ms. Busch has had other jobs and traveled, but she came back to Parks because it is the only place the public has a voice.
- Others who couldn't speak tonight support the teen programs that Parks provides.
- Parks does a wonderful job providing programs and has increased efficiency.
- Please keep community center and pool doors open.

Paul Talbert

- There are lots of great initiatives, especially #13 and #23, regarding the urban forest.
- The Green Seattle Partnership is a fabulous program with thousands of volunteers doing work Parks can't do because there is not enough funding – the City gets great bang for the buck with this program.
- Seward Park is an example where last week the Friends of Cedar River were working in the park – the program draws volunteers from around the region.
- Please move #23 up in the priority list

Al Smith

- Mr. Smith is a Seward Park volunteer.
- Seward Park needs more help; please support the Green Seattle Partnership.